Upgrading irrigation facilities in drought hit areas

584. SHRI B.K. HARIPRASAD: Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether more than 50% of the country's cultivable tracts are severely hit by drought with 31 out of 36 metrological sub-divisions reporting low or nil rains till recently;

(b) whether the meteorological department has advised the farmers in drought-hit areas not to depend on rains and starts irrigating their crops; and

(c) the steps being taken to upgrade the irrigation facilities in drought-hit areas, reckoned at 80 million hectares, needing urgent irrigation to save the standing crops?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI KANTI LAL BHURIA): (a) to (c) In India the main rain dependent crop season is kharif which depends on South West Monsoon (SWM). This year, SWM was adequate for the country as a whole with 32 out of 36 meteorological sub-divisions in excess or normal categories. Rabi *i.e.* the current cropping season is generally not rainfed and depends on irrigation. As per the figure of Rabi sowing as on 13th February, 2006, it is seen that 597.49 lakh hectares was already sown as against 580.52 lakh hectare for the corresponding period of last year. Based on storage position on major reservoir, no overall shortfall of water for irrigation is likely.

Provision of irrigation facilities is an on-going, long term process and many initiatives like the Accelerated Irrigation Benefit Programme (AIBP), State Sector Schemes for major, medium and minor irrigation, programmes for Development of Watershed, Drought Prone Area Programme, Desert Development Programme, etc. are seeking to enhance irrigation coverage or improve water availability for agriculture.

Drought assistance to Rajasthan

585. DR. GYAN PRAKASH PILANIA: Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether in view of the drought situation prevailing in Rajasthan,

consecutively for the past 3-4 years, for Kharif Crop the State Government has requested for relief measures and for mitigating the hardships to the farmers;

(b) if so, the demand, so made, during the last three years and the extent to which the same was met;

(c) how it was related to the loss/damage to crops suffered in the State; and

(d) the estimated loss and the relief amount granted by the centre for Rabi crops (particularly mustard and rapeseed) as requested by the Rajasthan Government?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI KANTI LAL BHURIA): (a) to (d) During 2005-06 the Government of Rajasthan has declared 15,778 villages in 22 districts, covering 37% of the area, as drought affected and submitted Memorandum seeking Drought Relief Assistance from the National Calamity Contingency Fund (NCCF). Based on the procedure prescribed under the NCCF, the High Level Committee (HLC), headed by the Union Agriculture Minister has approved Rs. 146.50 crores from NCCF, subject to adjustment of balances in the Calamity Relief Fund (CRF) of State. In addition, an allocation of 2.00 lakh MTs of foodgrains was also approved for Rajasthan for the month of march & April, 2006, in the first instance.

Details of assistance demanded by the Government of Rajasthan and released by the Central Government for the last three droughts is as under:

	NCCF		Foodgrains	
	Demand	Release	Demand	Allocate
2002-03	7519.76	889.61	56.00	32.56
2003-04	-	-	0.22	0.19
2004-05	2378.64	216.79	28.80	13.49

NCCF-in crores

Foodgrains-lakh MTs